



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2017

## A public statement from the Associated Country Women of the World

As the world marks the International Day of Families on 15 May 2017, we bear witness to a world in turmoil. Never before have families played a more crucial role in our societies, and never before has the need for strong family bonds and inter-generational cooperation been so necessary. The United Nations has declared a theme of 'Families, education and well-being' for 2017's International Day, and this speaks directly to the focal points of so much of the work done by the Associated Country Women of the World and other NGOs.

We see every day the need for stronger communities, and the open, honest, and brave discussion between those who may disagree, and families play a crucial role in this. Children raised in fear bring fear to others, whilst those who are nurtured and supported by their family - be it the mother and father, carers, grandparents, siblings and others who can guide and encourage our young people to walk a path through life with open eyes and hearts. Never before has the connection between children and grandparents been so strong. In many regions of the world we see grandparents stepping in to care for younger generations when parents are forced to work long hours, or cannot afford child care; in other countries there are whole communities who have been decimated by illness such as HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, leaving grandparents to raise their children's children.

We must support all families - from demanding universal access to good quality education to children, to sensible childcare options and sustainable support for parents, to life-long learning, and ensuring quality of living for grandparents and older generations. Work-family balance must be encouraged and supported, assisting parents in their educational and caregiving roles - the private sector must play a part in this, and responsible employment practice will always benefit all stakeholders.

ACWW connects and supports women and communities worldwide, and our project funding has had significant impacts on communities around the world. Our 1000<sup>th</sup> project was funded in 2015, providing IT skills to young and older women in India; this enables and empowers both ends of the age spectrum in their daily living, and is a significant step towards sustainability of education and training in the local area. The latest round of completed projects funded by ACWW included 5 Health Education projects, 4 focused on education and capacity building, 2 agricultural training and development projects and 1 nutrition and home economics project. These projects, along with 7 water and sanitation projects and 4 income generation schemes, benefited 142,375 people, of whom 91,187 were women and 15,295 were children. ACWW is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and recognises that families have a specific role in ensuring the achievement of SDG4, which secures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

With many countries suffering from internal conflict, and much of the world becoming more divided, nationalistic and isolationist, the role of the family in encouraging cultural and cross-community engagement and collaboration is crucial. We call on all governments and global bodies to work towards securing safe, fair and reasonable living conditions for families - particularly urgent for those living in refugee and internally-displaced person camps. War has a huge and unmitigated impact on families in so many ways, and we further call on those governments around the world leading wars of aggression to consider the realities they impose not only on the families of those they target, but also those in their own countries. Peace, communication, and a collective move towards global sustainability can only be achieved with the support of the family, but are also necessary for the existence of the family and thus all of our futures.

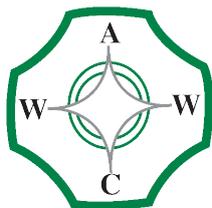
Ruth Shanks AM  
ACWW World President

## References

- 1 UN Women *“Step it Up for Gender Equality”*  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up>
- 2 United Nations Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women *“UNiTE”*  
<http://endviolence.un.org/>
- 3 UN Women *“#HeforShe”*  
<http://www.heforshe.org/en>
- 4 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals *“SDG 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.”*  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>
- 4 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women  
“Article 14:
  1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.
  2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
    - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
    - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
    - (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
    - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
    - (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;
    - (f) To participate in all community activities;
    - (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
    - (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

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Associated Country Women of the World  
Mary Sumner House  
24 Tufton Street  
London SW1P 3RB

Registered Charity no. 290367

+44 (0)207 7993875  
[info@acww.org.uk](mailto:info@acww.org.uk) [www.acww.org.uk](http://www.acww.org.uk)

For media and press enquiries, please contact:

Nick Newland, Media & Communications Manager  
+44 (0) 207 799 3875 or [nick@acww.org.uk](mailto:nick@acww.org.uk)



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